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Professionalised "civil society" vs. grassroots "uncivil society"?

The "Little Czech" 20 years later

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Abstract

The article is an analysis of the five most distinctive public mobilisations in the Czech Republic in the past 20 years. The analysis builds on two key debates regarding post-communist civil society (civil vs. uncivil society and transactional vs. participatory activism) and also on an analysis of Czech nationalism by the anthropologist Ladislav Holý. In the empirical part, it looks at the image of the nation and civil society in the cases of the movement against the opposition agreement (Thank You, Now Go, and Czech Television – A Public Affair), the movement against the American radar base, the anti-austerity protest movement, the anti-Roma protests and the islamophobic movement. The self-conception of the movements is complemented by an analysis of the images of them that were held by their opponents. The article points to the vague and indefinite nature of Czech national identity, and the fact that in the past two decades, it has been markedly connected with the image of the West and a relatively low significance of class. It also shows that "NGO-ised" transactional activism has become the subject of hostile rhetoric which may rely on the legitimacy deficit that this type of activism has. However, it concludes that to a certain extent, it shares this type of deficit with another type of civic activism; in the case of participatory activism, it identifies a dilemma between the polarisation of society and political ineffectiveness.

Keywords: Ladislav Holý, uncivil society, transactional activism, Czech Islamophobia, social movements

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Introduction

"Civil society" was a concept that was afforded great significance in the initial phases of the post-communist transformation. It played an important role both in political rhetoric and social science analysis. It was meant to be a tool for democratic self-expression and self-cultivation in post-communist societies. The concept was supposed to embody a type of solidarity that helps in practical terms to develop the values of liberal democracy and helps to overcome authoritarian attitudes, including narrow-minded nationalism.

Developments over the past few years, especially the "migration crisis", may be read as an ironic footnote to such expectations. The repertoires of action, and frequently also the self-confidence of "civil society", are being taken on by movements that, with their xenophobic attitudes, tendencies towards nationalist isolationalism, hate-filled rhetoric and political style, represent the antithesis of what might be thought of as a liberal democratic actor (even though they themselves invoke certain liberal democratic values, as do their self-styled defenders). The irony does not stop there, however. Among the key envisioned enemies (in opposition to which these movements define themselves) are the "non-profits":[2] a professionalised version of civil society, concerned with the defence of minorities and liberal values, as well as with internationalisation in professional culture and resources.

Traditional explanations, focusing narrowly on the post-communist context, are not of much help to us in describing the situation. The context of Trump, Brexit, Le Pen and Höfer is not an opportunity to emphasise post-communist exceptionalism. Rather, it is a factor that invites us to re-evaluate some established views that the West represents a "rule", while the East represents at best a correct and derived "application", and at worst a deviant "exception". It was in fact possible for this re-evaluation to occur long ago (cf. Buden 2009, cf. Barša 2013, cf. Gagyi 2015, cf. Spöri 2015).

An approach that emphasises the difference of the post-communist countries also neglects the considerable differences between the post-communist countries themselves. One of the key differences in the case of the Visegrad countries is the fact that in Poland and Hungary, the key political conflict that has emerged is the conservative vs. liberal cleavage (with conservative forces managing, at least rhetorically, to connect anti-liberal values and nationalism with the social solidarity aspect). In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, however, the main cleavage has been a socio-economic one (although the left pole of this division has shown itself

2 From "nezizkovky", which is an abbreviation of the term "neziskové organizace" (non-profit organisations). The word is often used ironically, given that one of the key ways of attacking NGOs is to point at the financial benefits that their members have from their work.

capable of integrating into its rhetoric a greater degree of nationalism and xenophobia than corresponds to its party affiliations on the European level) (Císař 2017).

In the case of the Czechs, too, we are witnessing the rise of populist forces, nationalist speeches and Islamophobia in public discourse. The Czech president, Miloš Zeman, has long made use of aggressive Islamophobic statements, even delivering a speech at a public Islamophobic demonstration. Ahead of the parliamentary elections in October 2017, government parties (the social democrats, the Christian democrats and the entrepreneurial populists ANO) and opposition parties alike for the most part rejected EU refugee quotas, and made use of anti-refugee and often also anti-EU rhetoric. The 2017 elections were won by the entrepreneurial populists, ANO, led by Andrej Babiš (the second-richest Czech) with a programme that stressed "efficiency" and the need to "manage the state like a company".

However, there are also differences with Poland and Hungary (and to a lesser extent even Slovakia). There has been public mobilisation against Islam, but it has only partially been connected with the efforts of the political elite. Unlike Polish and Hungarian nationalism, no positive political nationalist project has been formulated. Czech nationalism has not even defined itself as "illiberal". Indeed, it even casts itself as the protector of liberal values (although this does not change anything in terms of its aggressiveness). It is exactly this difference that is one of our basic research questions.

Our starting point will be, to a large extent, the analyses by anthropologist Ladislav Holý (1996) (see 1.c below). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Holý carried out a thorough reconstruction of the key autostereotype which he calls, with a certain degree of irony, the "Little Czech" ("malý český člověk" in Czech). He framed it in terms of the historic events of the Velvet Revolution and the breakup of Czechoslovakia. Our ambition is to build on Holý's analysis and to test its validity for the two decades that have passed since his work was published. Building on Holý's research, which focused inter alia on the demonstrations of 1989, we consider the large public mobilisations that in one way or another invoke the "society" or "nation", to be a suitable way of indicating which ideas regarding the nation are present in the public imagination.

At the same time, this selection leads to the other questions posed in this text: What role does the *form* of the civic movement take? Previous research into social movements in CEE shows that in a number of cases, the actual social movements do not correspond to classic ideas regarding "civil society", either in their content or form. There is a paradoxical tension; the movements that correspond, in their values and approaches, to liberal democratic ideas regarding civil society have changed into NGOs, which, as the result of professionalisation, corporate hierarchy and the determinative nature of external funding and competition for grants, end up producing the alienation that civil society should be overcoming. On the other hand, spontaneous popular movements with strong support have often turned *against* liberal democratic values.

The two components of this tension have thus far been the subject of two largely separate academic debates (see sections 1.a and 1.b below). Now, in the context of a movement against "do-gooders" (NGOs, universities, liberals, "neomarxists"…) that is taking place across the West (and to an even greater extent in some Eastern European countries), the components of these tensions have also become a significant theme in the rhetoric of some movements.

In the first part of this paper, we shall present the conceptual starting points of our research: above all the concepts of the "uncivil society", the debate on "transactional activism" and Czech nationalism, as defined by Holý. In the second part, we will analyse individual public mobilisations.[3]

Research questions and methodological remarks

We have focused on the five most significant mobilisations of the last 20 years. In analysing them, we asked the following questions. What picture of the nation appeared in the movements in question, what was this based on, and to what did it refer? What concept of participation developed during the mobilisations? Did the mobilisations contain an element of self-definition in relation to the elites? How are these elites understood, and what does this reveal about the self-conception of the movements? Building on these questions, we will also focus specifically on the movements' attitude to political parties and non-governmental organisations. We shall also focus on the main opponents of these movements and the ways in which they have attacked their legitimacy, since this will help us to gain a fuller picture of the nation and participation.

We selected the individual mobilisations on the basis of how long they lasted, how large they were (in terms of the number of demonstration participants and petition signatures) and their social significance (in terms of public discussion and media coverage). Combining these criteria led us to choose the protests against the "opposition agreement", the demonstrations against the US military radar base, anti-austerity protests, anti-Roma demonstrations and Islamophobic activities.[4] Our understanding of mobilisation and social movements is, in keeping with Tilly (1985, 1998, 2004), a collection of activities analogical to a campaign, not as a single organisation or group. Where necessary, we will describe the various different currents that participated in a single mobilisation. We shall also follow on from Tilly in our emphasis on the relational character of movements and the need to perceive them in relation to elites or in their interactions with counter-movements. We make use of topoi analysis topoi as part of a critical discourse analysis (Wodak 2015) and analyse socio-cognitive frameworks in research into social movements (Benford–Snow 1988, 2000). Given that we are attempting to cover several themes for five different initiatives however, our goal will be to reconstruct only the most basic and important frameworks. We have emphasised tropes and frameworks that were repeated or notably present, but their reconstruction is nevertheless the result of our interpretational choices.

We look at five key public mobilisations that have taken place in the Czech Republic since the end of the 1990s. We have subjected the last of these, Islamophobic mobilisation during the migration crisis, to

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3 We are very grateful to Pavel Barša for many inspirational discussions and stimuli for this text and to Zora Hesová, Tobias Spöri, Jan Charvát and two anonymous reviewers for their comments.

4 We could have included the wave of alter-globalisation mobilisations in 1998–2000, with street parties attended by thousands of people and culminating in the form of protests against the IMF and World Bank, as well as protests against the violent breakup of the Czechtek technoparty in 2005 and the protests against the reform of the healthcare system in 2008. In the first and third cases, in particular, we could have pointed to a similar or larger number of demonstration participants and a similar level of media coverage compared to some of the mobilisations we have chosen. However, we believe that in view of our research questions our choice of mobilisations is legitimate – the character of the alter-globalisation demonstrations meant that no debate developed around them regarding the concept of the people/nation, while in the case of the protests against healthcare reform, the subsequent anti-austerity protests were both analogical (in actors, agenda and style) and more extensive.

deep empirical research (using participatory observation and an analysis of leaders' speeches).[5] However, our discussions of previous mobilisations (the movements against corruption and the opposition agreement, the movement against the US radar base, the anti-austerity movement and mobilisations against Roma in northern Bohemia) are based on others' research, and also on retrospective analyses of their media coverage, websites, video recordings and other remnant material. Given that the Islamophobic movement is our main theme, while the other movements provide more of a framework for comparison, this approach seems to us legitimate.

Concepts and starting points

1.a Citizen participation: Civil or uncivil society?

After the extensive popular mobilisations that overthrew socialist dictatorships (or at the very least formed a colourful background to their overthrow) (cf. Krapfl 2013, cf. Ost 2005), and also, it seems, as a result of the legacy of the "long sixties" and the "world revolution of 1968" (cf. Mazower 2012, cf. Wallerstein 2002), there were very heavily normative ideas regarding the role of social movements, translated into the language of "civil society". This, in the imagination of many people, needed to become a key part of liberal democracies, their foundation, the guardian of liberal democratic values, a source of new political themes, one of the spaces for the control of power, a source of civic virtues, and so on (see Keane et al. 1988, Znoj 2015). Soon, however, it became apparent that many participatory social movements did not fulfil these roles. Indeed, from the point of view of liberal democratic values, they had more of an opposite effect (for a representative summary of these doubts and reflections on them, see Kopecký–Mudde 2003). In this section, we will discuss the concept of "uncivil society" as an attempt to describe actors who meet the definition of "civic society" in sociological, but not in normative terms. In the debate regarding the concept (largely used as a journalistic label with only a vaguely defined meaning by Kopecký) we build freely on Kopecký and Mudde, who saw the concept as a tool for correcting unrealistic expectations (and connected disappointments) with regard to civil society in the post-communist countries (Kopecký–Mudde 2003). Our summary of their concept may start with the question of what it means to be "civil" in civil society. There are five possible answers.

1. *Civic virtues* and *civic solidarity*, or at the very least loyalty towards other citizens, willingness to *accept limits* on one's behaviour with regard to these other citizens.
2. The *values* of liberal democracy connected with their (limited, because it does not reflect on its assumptions) *universalism.*
3. Space that is *autonomous* of the state and the market, of the absence of the logic of political

5 We used two sources in our analysis. The first involved observation of Islamophobic demonstrations, carried out by one of the authors of this paper between 18 August 2015 and 1 May 2016. The analysis consisted of observing the movement's demonstrations, carrying out interviews at the demonstrations and carrying out semi-structured interviews with demonstration participants. The observation took place at 14 demonstrations. The number of interviews carried out at the demonstrations was around 50, with a further 11 more extensive semi-structured interviews.
The second source of analysis consisted of articles in *Parlamentní listy* focusing on Islamophobic leaders Martin Konvička and Petr Hampl. *Parlamentní listy* is a tabloid news website that has given a large amount of space and sympathy to Islamophobic mobilisation, and has itself contributed to it considerably, while also profiting from this mobilisation. They are by far "the most visited news website which is not part of any mainstream media conglomerate, and currently occupies the eighth place on the list of the most popular Czech online news servers" (Stětka 2016). We followed both between January 2015 and August 2016.

domination and financial gain.

4. The principle of (civil) *equality* which governs the relationships between the individual participants as part of the organisation of civil society, their democratic internal functioning
5. *Non-violence*: civil society is also a society of unarmed civilians (cf. Elias 1969), who claim their rights and their power by means of the tactics and techniques of non-violent protest. This is partly an idealisation based on an over-generalisation of the non-violent factions of the post-1968 movement and above all of 1989 from the perspective of the regimes which did not react with violence. To question the idea of non-violence as the only means used by civic society, it was not necessary to read more Locke or to remember the American revolution, or to wait for Majdan and the Arab Spring. It was enough to have studied Romania in 1989 or to notice that even legitimate protests sometimes grow into displays of violent resistance (Kopecký–Mudde 2003).

This definition naturally provides an indication of what social movements come under the heading of "uncivil society". In schematic terms, we may ascribe the following characteristics to them (it is not necessary that they meet all of them). They are those movements which do not consider their activity to be bounded by civic loyalty or the basic rights of other groups of citizens. Their relationship to liberal democracy is either cynical and instrumental or openly antagonistic. They may abuse their role of civic activists in order to push the non-transparent agendas of some groups within the state, or of business groups. Internally, they may function hierarchically, or they may use pressure, abuse of power and so on. They often do not forswear violence; indeed they may fulminate in favour of its necessity, highlighting the seriousness of their cause with dramatic references to the carrying out or preparation of such violence. They make broad use of demonisation and hate speech, which can be perceived as a form of verbal violence.

We may, understandably, criticise this conceptualisation as being a schematic pathologisation that assumes the standards of Western liberal democratic modernity as the norm and underestimates the significance of different social contexts (Gagyi 2015: 24). There are good arguments that this schematisation may (as with the concept of extremism) include a number of various movements and may stigmatise movements that do not belong to liberal democratic "civil society" as a result of their accent on emancipatory values (anarchists, radical environmentalists, alter-globalists). In such a case, it includes both those who cast doubt on the values of freedom and equality (the far right) and those who recognise them more than they would a standard liberal democracy (Piotrowski 2009, 2017).

It may also be perceived as based on overly black-and-white dichotomy that is perhaps only useful only for researching the far right (compare its use for the Russian context by Umland 2007) but which makes it harder to capture borderline cases where there is a clash of two values connected with liberal democracy. It is these cases, however, that are often very important for the political culture – frequently in post-communist countries, but also in Western ones. Anti-communism, the model case for post-communist countries, often in the name of liberal democratic values and universalism (although often in the name of conservative particularism and nationalism, and often in a difficult-to-discern mixture) aims at the total suppression of communists or post-communists (Křeček–Vochocová 2009, Slačálek 2013, Holubec 2015). Some anti-racist and

anti-sexist groups may also, in enforcing key values of liberal democracy (although these are values that are often far from commonplace in the given societies, as indeed in other societies) have tendencies towards total exclusion, demonisation or even the use of vigilante violence (cf. Bastl 2010).

Although we recognise the relevance of these objections, we believe the concept of the “uncivil society” is relevant not just as a source of labelling or as a superfluous designation for the far right. It may contribute to the debate as: 1) a corrective to the exaggeratedly optimistic and one-sided view of civil society that has played a strong role in part of the post-communist ideology and social sciences (a reminder that the sociological definition of civil society should also include actors who are not suitable for the optimistic normative definition of civil society by political theory); and also as 2) an ideal type that describes the essential features and tendencies of a number of social movements.

But we should keep in mind Cas Mudde’s claim in his closing chapter of the key book on “(un)civil society”: *“In many ways […] ‘uncivil movements’ […] are more authentic representatives of civil society in post-communist Europe. Not only do they indeed fill the space between the household and the (national) state; they also play an important role in the process of democratisation, be it directly or indirectly (by provoking ‘civil’ movements to respond to their challenge). Moreover, unlike many prominent ‘civil’ organisations in Eastern Europe, which are elite-driven NGOs detached from main parts of society, many ‘uncivil’ organisations are true social movements, i.e. involved in grass-roots supported contentious politics (cf. Tarrow 2002). Like ‘civil’ groups, they can at times be part of ‘advocacy networks’”* (in Kopecký–Mudde 2003: 159). Which brings us to the next section.

1.b Participatory social movements vs. transactional activism

In addition to the dichotomy of civil vs. uncivil society we will also work with the dichotomy of participatory social movements vs. transactional activism. This is to a certain extent a response to researchers’ disappointment at the ebbing of the tide of social movements at the start of the 1990s in the post-communist countries, and at the fact that these movements were gradually replaced by professionalising NGOs dependent on foreign patronage (Fagan 2004, 2005). The result then, are “NGOs without civil society” (Fagan 2005: 528).

This criticism has provoked extensive discussion (for a review of which see Saxonberg–Jacobsson 2013). Tarrow and Petrova (2007) have come up with the concept of “transactional activism”. This term was intended to describe the modus operandi of these NGOs, which do not require the direct participation of a large number of members, but rather relationships with foreign donors, interconnection and influence over local elites. Although the authors are aware that this model brings a number of problems from the viewpoint of the theory of democracy and civic society, they end their text with a certain degree both of insight and cynicism. Given the essentially undemocratic, expert and elite way in which decisions are taken at the level of the EU, this form of activism appears to be the most suitable option in view of the environment in which the given actors function (Petrova–Tarrow 2007: 88).

According to Císař (2008, 2013), in the case of the Czech Republic, it is very much possible to doubt Fagan’s thesis that the squeezing out of participatory activism by transactional activism has deprived ci-

vil society of an essential dimension. Smaller professionalised groups with foreign patronage are capable of defending some minority agendas (Císař gives the example of feminism and Greenpeace's activities against the US military radar base), and perhaps are able to do so more thoroughly than a movement anchored in local society (with its its limitations and prejudices). The results of the activity of advocacy organisations and the agencies that have financed them are, according to Císař, similar in both the post-communist Czech Republic and the US (Císař 2013: 77–79). In the US, too, the result has been a dependency on financing, however local. Císař says that objections to advocacy without participation correspond to the idealisation of civil society and to illusory ideas connected with participatory and radical democracy, rather than corresponding to the reality and theory of liberal democracy.

Nevertheless, there are possible objections to this position. This kind of replacement for “participation” is depoliticising and as a result undemocratic (the agenda is decided by a foreign sponsor, and is not under the control of the local community). As a result, it generates alienation in the broader sections of society, and fulfils only some of the roles of a social movement, while there are others (the socialisation of the broader sections of society into politics and protest action, the signalisation of local social problems) that it is unable to fulfil (Novák 2017, Slačálek–Svobodová 2017). It is certainly possible to claim that “transactional activism” is adequate, given the current democratic deficit of both the EU and national democratic systems. However, this would also mean accepting a situation where the remnants of civil society tend more to deepen this deficit rather than have the capability to correct it.

1.c Czech nationalism (according to Ladislav Holý)

Possibly the best analysis of Czech nationalism comes from anthropologist Ladislav Holý (1996), however good it is to complement it with the historical analyses of Miloš Havelka (1995, 2002, 2005), Jan Tesař (2001), Podiven's controversial analysis (2003) or the sociological analysis of F. Mayer (2009), as well as some criticisms, such as that of Mills Kelly (1996).[6] From Ladislav Holý's analysis we can take (sometimes over and above the author's interpretation, or even at odds with it, but always in keeping with his method of asking questions) three findings regarding Czech nationalism: three forms of Czech nationalism that overlap each other.

The nationalism present on the level of the predominant discourse is not a strong and proud nationalism, but more a *denial* of such nationalism. Ladislav Holý even claimed (specifically in the context of the breakup of

6 We consider Holý's to be the best account of the subject of Czech national identity, its quality remaining unaffected by his occasional interpretational and factual mistakes and not entirely consummate mastery of the historical debates, which are not the main subject of the book. In some passages, the author is considerably indebted to the courageous and inspirational analyses of Petr Pithart, and at times these “second-hand” parts can result in somewhat grotesque mistakes, such as the labelling of Josef Pekař as a representative of “consciously non-nationalist historiography” (Holy 1996). Although Pekař was a great historian, and some of his interpretations of Czech history were deliberately formulated in the face of the predominant national historical mythology, he was at the same time a markedly conservative nationalist (and also an anti-semite), who, against Masaryk's attempt to formulate the “idea” of the Czech nation in universalist and humanist terms, defended the thesis that the meaning of national history is the nation itself, which has existed since the 10th century (Havelka 1995, 2002, 2015: 113–141, Havránek 1993, Kučera 2005, Strobach 2010). It is possible to say that Pekař represented an alternative to the dominant current of Czech national history as it was put forward in the 20th century, but Holý's book itself is the best proof that Pekař's basic theses became the part of “undercurrent” of Czech national consciousness, despite the fact that on a political level, Pekař's opponent chalked up a formal win (see below).

Czechoslovakia) that Czech nationalism often displays itself in this very denial. It ascribes the nationalist label to others, as a token of backwardness (to the Slovaks in particular, in the context of Holý's research, but we could also add the Poles, Hungarians, the Balkan nations and so on) while identifying itself with universalist ideas, progressiveness and the West. It perceives nationalism, and above all some of its accompanying phenomena (national chauvinism and anti-semitism), as essentially backward.

The second thing is that the national identity is the *identity of "little people"*. Ladislav Holý here reconstructs the autostereotype of the "Little Czech" ("malý český člověk" in Czech): someone standing outside "big history" and the world of masters, of whatever type. This stereotype has a long tradition in debates on the "small nation" of the Czechs, on the Czech character and Czech smallness and the figure of the "Čecháček", which also means "little Czech", but in a more pejorative sense (see, for example, Havelka 2002). Overall, however, this stereotype tends to be used only in part ironically, since it also contains a feeling that the "small" are morally ascendant over the "big". According to Holý, a feeling of alienation towards the nobility and the Catholic Church (and, as a result, towards any religion) and a shallow social stratification resulted in an orientation towards practicality and craftsmanship, a plebeian mentality and a certain type of cynicism. The "little Czech" is collectivist and egalitarian, whose nationalism is bedded down into a collection of unreconstructed collectivist ideas, in which there are interesting collisions. Ideas regarding his own superiority (culture, the cleverness of "little Czech hands" – or manual dexterity – combined with technological prowess) collide with self-abasement, and a self-irony connected with the image of the Good Soldier Švejk, are all mixed with the pathos of references to a pantheon of great but empty national figures transformed into symbols. The result is apoliticality, an alienation from the state and political power, and a feeling that there is a division between the "truth" of the nation (which is often connected to the concept of what is "natural", and overlaps with perceptions of the economic cogency of the market and the moral or custom-based cogency of the traditional gender order) and the "lie" of the state. This also seems to be connected to the shaky foundations of Czech statehood, the partial excising of the 17th and 18th centuries from Czech history, and the frequent perception of Habsburg domination and the Austro-Hungarian state as something foreign and alien (cf. Podiven 2003).

Under the surface of these two discourses is nevertheless a *bottom current* of Czech "patriotism" (as allegedly opposed to the "nationalism" of other nations), essentially a Young Czech[7] image of history and of Czechs themselves as a blood brotherhood connected by great history. The former two features effectively prevent reflection on this "hard core" of ethnic nationalism, which as Mills Kelly (1996) pointed out in a review

7 The Young Czechs, formally the National Party of Free Thinkers, and then the National Democracy (1918–1934), were a party that combined, following the model of some German movements, economic liberalism, limited progressivism on religious issues, and nationalism, often of a fairly intense type. The party aspired to a leading position in the nation, although it was prevented from attaining one in the 1990s by party differentiation. Alois Jirásek, the nationalist writer described as the "Czech Walter Scott" was a Young Czech and later a National Democrat senator. Jirásek played a key role in the establishment of a particular view of the Czech national past, a view that was largely taken on by the communists. Zdeněk Nejedlý, as the author of the Czech(oslovak) fusion of nationalism and communism, made the mass publication of Jirásek's historical novels one of the key elements in the establishment of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s and early 1950s. For a thesis on the strong fusion of nationalism and liberalism – influenced by German development – as a long-term feature of Czech political culture, see Havelka (2015). This thesis runs counter to Holý's idea of the rivalry between nationalism and pro-western individualism, and seems to be confirmed by the turn by Václav Klaus, the representative of this pro-western individualism, towards unreflected nationalism of a markedly anti-German hue and communist genealogy in the second half of the 1990s at the latest, (although he had used nationalist rhetoric earlier, when, for example, arguing in favour of voucher privatisation).

of Holý, may take on a very demonic form of aggressive nationalism, as shown by anti-semitism during the Polná affair,[8] and the activities of neo-Nazi skinheads in the 1990s. To this we should add above all the rise of Catholic conservative nationalism during the “Second Republic” when, after the Munich conference, hope died in the unity of Western universalism and the national interest (Rataj 1997, Rataj 2006, Podiven 2003, Pithart 1991, Slačálek 2010, Barša 2016).

2. Nation and participation in Czech protest mobilisations

We shall present our analysis in short sub-chapters, in which we will first briefly summarise the basic information regarding the particular mobilisation and briefly characterise it, and then show by which frames the image of the nation was displayed in the mobilisation in question and what characteristics this image had, how the movement perceived its own participation, the power elites and civil society. There will then follow a brief summary of which arguments or images were used to cast doubt on and attack the various mobilisations by their most significant opponents.

2.a Mobilisation against the “opposition agreement”

The political compromise which was entered into after the 1998 election by the leaders of the neoliberal ODS, Václav Klaus, and the Czech Social Democratic Party, Miloš Zeman, was referred to by the leaders themselves as the “opposition agreement”. The Social Democrats gained support for their single-party government in exchange for concessions to the ODS. This agreement was often seen as immoral, if not as a direct display of political corruption and as an attack on political competition, the quality of democracy, civil society and also on the position of President Václav Havel. On the tenth anniversary of the revolution of 1989, the former student leaders published a declaration called *“Děkujeme, odejděte!” (“Thank You, Now Go!”),* which called on politicians to give up their places to younger people. The appeal had a considerable response, being signed by an alleged 200,000 people; around 50–70,000 people also attended a demonstration in support of the declaration.

A further marked display of antipathy to the opposition agreement came a year after the declaration, in the winter of 2000–2001, when there was a mobilisation against the changes in the management of Czech Television, seen as an attack on the independence of the public TV station and on freedom of speech in general. The protests, known as the “TV crisis”, included an occupation and a strike by Czech TV’s employees with the support of “significant figures” in Czech public life, often former dissidents. There were occupying strikes and parallel broadcasts by the new management and the “rebels”, as well as demonstrations, the largest of which was estimated at around a hundred thousand participants. This mobilisation was successful from the point of view of maintaining Czech Television’s independence, as well as in terms of delegitimising the “opposition agreement” (Dvořáková 2002, Nekvapil 2003, Kunc 2004). These protests, supported by “significant figures in public life”, were followed in spirit by several other protests in the next decades, and focused on corruption.

8 In 1899 a Jewish man, Leopold Hilsner, was accused of the murder of Anežka Hrůzová near the town of Polná. This became an opportunity for a extensive campaign of anti-semitism and accusations of Jews of ritual murder. Hilsner was defended by Tomáš G. Masaryk, later to become president. Masaryk found himself under considerable pressure as a result, being attacked, for example, by fanaticised students.

Continuity with the Velvet Revolution

Something of key importance to the self-conception of participants in the mobilisation against the opposition agreement was an identification with the legacy of the velvet revolution. The authors of the *"Thank You, Now Go!"* declaration were the former student leaders of the 1989 protests, and the text of the declaration itself stressed continuity; it contained an appreciation of the current generation of politicians for their role in the transformation, and also an appeal that they make way for others (Děkujeme, odejděte!, 1999). The appeal *"Communists, stay at home"* on the posters for the main *"Thank You, Now Go!"* (paš, 1999) demonstration made it clear who was not included in the nation as it had been conceived, just as the elites could rule themselves out by reason of their amoral conduct, or because they had stolen the revolution and its results from the people.

During the protests, a direct, indeed personal continuity with November 1989 was often stressed. It was not just about the student leaders who signed the *"Thank You, Now Go!"* appeal. When, during the occupying strike, a rebel journalist was let out, he turned to Jana Bobošiková with the words: *"In '89, I was freezing on Wenceslas Square, I don't know about you, Jana."* (ČT1 – obrazovka ČT, 2013) The actor Ladislav Frej, speaking at a meeting in support of the rebel journalists, said: *"They've forgotten one thing. They're so shameless, they think they can do anything. But the revolution hasn't ended, it's still carrying on"* (Bobovize 2000).

The mobilised Czechia vs. the better Czechia (or the better Czechs?)

The movement negotiated its legitimacy in various ways, which correspond to Tilly's concepts of "worthiness" and "numbers" (Tilly 2004). It was important to the protests that they had mass support, including two occasions on which the symbolic centre of Prague, Wenceslas Square, was filled (3 December, 1999 and 3 January, 2001), signatures under the declaration, and opinion polls, which correspond to numbers. In the same way, however, the movement's participants, either consciously or subconsciously, formulated their value in society. Continuity with the most important political revolution in the past, together with the exclusion of the communists, made it clear that in this concept of the public, not all voices had the same value. During *"Thank You, Now Go!",* the role of the former "student leaders" of 1989 was key, and during the Czech Television protest, a key role was played by the support of "personalities" who were frequently connected with culture and/or dissent against the previous regime. The concentrated charisma and moral capital of these personalities stood in opposition to the delegitimised power of the politicians.

Defence of the public interest (= transformation = democracy = integration into Western Europe)

The *"Thank You, Now Go!"* appeal may be a fundamental criticism of the existing political elite, but at the same time it is a recognition of the results of transformation, largely connected with the policies of the "opposition agreement" (above all by the hated ODS). This paradox even found its way into the title of the declaration. The declaration was not a criticism of the system, nor was it a formulation of any sort of concrete alternative within the system. It was more about emphasising "values", "decency" and "morals", and later also (in the case of the television crisis) about limiting and controlling political power.

In some cases, these values had a political content, no matter how vaguely formed. Above all, this was the journey to the West *("a historic chance to return to a place among the advanced states of Europe")* that in the *"Thank You, Now Go!"* declaration was seen as a key national good, and one that would also verify the democratic qualities of individual Czech politicians. The other was the interests of the "middle entrepreneurial classes" (Děkujeme, odejděte! 1999).

The opponents' view: Elitists with no mandate

The main opponents of *"Thank You, Now Go!"* and the rebel television journalists were the representatives of the opposition agreement and the journalists who supported them. The basic framework was to connect legitimacy with a strictly-conceived legal positivism: the representatives of the opposition agreement defended their position from criticism by saying that they had received a sufficient mandate from voters, unlike the alleged spokespeople of civil society, who had "not been elected by anyone". This emphasis on legality strengthened further in the period of the television crisis, when the rebel journalists carried out a de facto occupying strike, compared by Klaus to some elements of the Communist coup d'etat in 1948[9] and prime minister Miloš Zeman talked about a "cultural revolution" (Bobovize 2000, Kopp 2001).

The image of the illegitimate behaviour of people with no mandate was completed by the image of elites who put themselves into a role that was above ordinary people, who wanted to gain more rights and to moralise from some sort of position of superiority. Sometimes an image of non-working artists living to the detriment of the people was also evoked. The lyrics of a song by popular songwriter Ivan Mládek are illustrative: *"The cultural front, the television guys, in favour of permanent gentle revolution [...] looking for a new path for the nation [...] how glad they would be if it all changed round, and truth and love prevailed over work"* (ODS 2001/Britské listy, 2005).[10]

2.b The anti-radar movement

Shortly after the 2006 election, the right-wing governing coalition announced that it had started talks on the location of a component in the anti-missile defense system. Opinion polls suggested that the majority of the Czech public were against it. A platform called Ne základnám (No to the Bases) decided to articulate the public's objections; it consisted of civic activists from the environmental and pacifist movements (the Humanist Party), the radical left (above all the Trotskyists) and others. Over the course of three years, the movement became an adversary to the government, and it maintained opposition to the radar system not just in terms of passive numbers in opinion polls, but also as a political appeal. The main tool was comprised of demonstrations, which drew hundreds or even thousands of people (the largest being around ten thousand); other tools of pressure included the occupation of the place where the radar system was to be located, and a protest hunger strike by several of the movement's activists (which in the end, after the intervention of the Social Democrat leader, became a chain hunger strike by the movement's supporters). The movement had a considerable response.

9 In reaction to a statement by President Václav Havel, who in declaring support for the rebels, compared the change in the Czech Television Council (inspired by opposition agreement politicians) to a communist putsch.

10 *"Truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred"* is a popular slogan used by Václav Havel in the Velvet Revolution of 1989. At this time, Havel was supporting protest against the opposition agreement.

The Czech debate over the radar system ended in 2009, when Obama withdraw the request for the creation of the base (Novomestská 2012, Navrátil 2017).

“We are the people”/(nation)

In addition to arguments rooted in criticism of US foreign policy and above all George W. Bush’s “war on terror”, and also in addition to those connected with the general theme of peace, the arsenal of arguments that No to the Bases had also included discourses relating to national independence and popular sovereignty. This emphasis on popular sovereignty had a much greater significance. The movement consistently put itself in the role of representative of the majority public opinion, and asked for the majority to be able to decide in a continuously demanded referendum. Together with the representation of the majority opinion went a demand that this opinion be properly represented in the media: the protests were addressed not just to the political elites, but also to the media, in particular Czech Television. The opinion of most citizens, as expressed in opinion polls, gave the movement a specific type of self-confidence in confrontation with the political and media elites.

The movement allowed for a collective membership, and its members included non-government organisations, in whose legitimacy it thus participated. The core of its legitimacy nevertheless lay elsewhere, in its reference to the majority will of the people, which the movement aimed to materialise and bring to the scene with its demand for a referendum.

Will we be betrayed again?

The movement worked much less with nationally-oriented rhetoric, largely in such a way that it implicitly drew a contrast between the little Czech and his little state and nation on one hand, and the great interests of the great powers and their rivalries on the other hand. There were frequent evocations of national traumas, above all the Munich agreement (the slogan “about us without us”, connected with protests against the Munich agreement in 1938, was used in a number of contexts to refer to decisions taken by great powers and politicians alienated from the people) and the 1968 occupation.

The opponents’ view: the demonic people, casting doubt on pro-Western development, Russian agents

The main opponents of the radar opponents were the right-wing liberal government, former president Václav Havel and the pro-American and right-wing part of the media and cultural elites. One of the key images that delegitimised the people, the pacifist movement and Western Europe, was once again Munich (Slačálek 2010), this time in the role of a reference to the appeasement of evil and the taking up of a position that was both morally and practically defective. The fact that a majority of people opposed the radar was merely confirmation that fundamental questions should not be decided by a direct expression of the will of the people, who are not competent to judge and easily fall prey to various demagogues. The radar was declared to be a further logical step in the pro-Western development of Czech society (although this step was rendered slightly less convincing compared to previous ones by the fact that it was a one-sided equation of the West with the US as opposed to the EU, and that it was, moreover, the US of President George W Bush). In this context, an

emphasis was placed on the “extremist” attitudes of some of the left-wing members of No to the Bases (above all the Trotskyists), and the dubious communist past of one significant activist. The opponents of the radar base were also (with no evidence) accused of ties to the Russian secret service (Novomestská 2012).

2.c The anti-austerity movement

When a right-wing government took power in 2010 with an ambitious programme of cuts and neoliberal reforms, a relatively broad movement began to form against it. Initially, it was represented above all by two civic associations of opponents, ProAlt and Alternativa zdola (Grassroots Alternative). Both were coalitions of activists from the radical and liberal left. ProAlt was broader and more liberal, and focused above all on criticism. The Grassroots Alternative, formed around the ambitious left-wing economist Ilona Švihlíková, was more open to that part of the left which held conservative values and it also attempted to formulate alternatives.

The government was gradually faced by a wider spectrum of actors. The most significant in terms of numbers were the unions, who joined together with ProAlt and other groups in a coalition called Stop the Government! Some demonstrations are estimated to have been attended by up to a hundred thousand people, as a result of the union participation. Opposition also came from students and representatives of higher education, who held protests against the government’s proposed reform of higher education, criticised as both neoliberal and incompetent. It also came from populist forces: the Holešov Appeal, a movement that had a programme of nationalism and direct democracy, and called among other things for the abolition of political parties; the right-wing populist Tomio Okamura with his movement Úsvit přímé demokracie (Dawn of Direct Democracy); and the agricultural entrepreneur Andrej Babiš, the second-richest person in the Czech Republic, and his movement ANO, who emphasised the theme of corruption, proposing instead his technocratic “entrepreneuralist populism”. Lastly, there was Miloš Zeman, the former chair of the Social Democrats. It was the populists who managed to make most use of the government’s lack of popularity (it fell in 2013 as the result of a corruption scandal). Tomio Okamura used it to enter parliament with his extreme right-wing party. Andrej Babiš used it for his own election success (his movement came second in the elections 2014 and entered the governing coalition, with Babiš becoming finance minister; in elections 2017 ANO won). Miloš Zeman won the 2013 presidential election.

Frames of the nation: society, colony, educated people, people in struggle

A large part of the anti-austerity movement did not use the rhetoric of the nation; there was more of an emphasis on social solidarity. Even the most liberal movement, ProAlt, emphasised “society” and the defence of solidarity and redistribution as part of this. ProAlt avoided using a national concept of this “society”. It protested against exclusion and divisions in society, and saw nationalist rhetoric as a display of such divisions. Grassroots Alternative was less hesitant to avoid the rhetoric of the nation, as shown by its participation in the Alliance of Work and Solidarity with left-wing nationalists from the Communist Party, and by the fact that economist Ilona Švihlíková stood in the parliamentary elections for President Miloš Zeman’s party (the party did not succeed) and by the movement’s references to the traditions of Czech patriotism. Švihlíková also addressed the national question in her professional work, notably in her book *How We Became a Colony*

(2015), where she presented the outflow of profits and the foreign ownership of Czech companies as a political problem. This problem, most clearly demonstrable in the difference between Czech and German wages (which has subsequently become the subject of a trade union campaign) is connected, according to Švihlíková, with the unwillingness of the Czech elites to behave like representatives of a sovereign state, and their “inability to formulate the national interest and assert it.” An interview with Švihlíková in the left-wing *A2larm* was entitled *We need a new national revival* (Fiala 2015).[11] However, these things – the trade union campaign for the “end of cheap labour”, Švihlíková’s book and the formulation of the “national”/colonial question – came after the fall of the Nečas government and with it, the ebbing of the anti-austerity movement.

The university movement also did not address the issue of the nation much, being more concerned with the autonomy of universities and the accessibility of higher education. However, its argumentation did include the image of the educated nation and the tradition of national education, and also the image of education as the basis for the future of a society that was for the most part implicitly identified with the nation. Education was perceived as an economically advantageous alternative for society, one that that would develop it and move it away from "assembly line"-type work with low added value (the “assembly factory”) (cf. Přátelé komunizace, 2013).

Unlike these movements, the various populist movements had a strong national element. The colours of the national flag were the Holešov Appeal’s main symbol. The rhetoric of the movement built partially and critically on November 1989, emphasising that Czechs did not deserve such conditions and political elites. Against the politicians, it directly stressed the will of the people, which was to be articulated by means of a referendum and a “National Council”. The Holešov Appeal gradually stressed the theme of the nation more and more, referring also to Czechoslovak, Hussite and Slavonic traditions (Popelka, w.d.). Nevertheless, this language was part of the initative’s fairly exalted, radical and eccentric rhetoric. Okamura went for a style of nationalism which did not have much positive content, but used a highly aggressive othering of Roma, for example. Babiš, for his part, chose an indefinite idea based above all on the concept of a better future and hard work, thanks to which society would deserve this future. Zeman then used national themes only episodically to begin with, with the playing of the anti-German card in relation to the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans helping him towards election victory.

Movement vs. politicians

The movements criticised the political elite. Although the main focus of the criticism was, especially in the case of ProAlt and Grassroots Alternative, the content of the government’s public policy, the rhetoric of both initiatives also stressed the theme of democracy conceived of as public participation. In this sense, ProAlt defended itself against criticism that it was an “antipolitical” movement – on the contrary, in the words of its spokesperson Tereza Stöckelová, it espoused a wider concept of politics than that usually defended by

11 It would be interesting to compare Švihlíková’s purely economic and related political view of the matter with the way in which the rhetoric of the “colony” is used by Polish-American literary theorist Ewa Thompson and by the authors connected to her, most of whom belong to Poland’s conservative camp. Thompson also addresses poverty, but “colony” is not only an economic metaphor for her; she uses post-colonial theory to describe the state of mind of the post-communist liberal elites (Thompson 2000, 2014, Sowa 2011, Zarycki 2014).

political parties (Tereza Stöckelová, 2011). Either way, the movement for the most part tended to keep itself at a distance from political parties.

The populists, meanwhile, utterly rejected the political elites as criminal. The degree to which they rejected the political elites was a fundamental aspect of their mobilisation, symbolised at one demonstration by a theatrical representation of the execution of three figures labelled as "corrupt politicians". The people were supposed to act directly: *"We need to express our lack of confidence in this government, if the political parties are unable to."* (Holešovská výzva, 2012) In addition to attacking the political elites, they also often attacked the media elites, with one of the Holešov Appeal's demonstrations ending at the Czech Television headquarters. What they did find acceptable was the ethos of expertise. As well as direct democracy, they demanded the creation of a "government of experts". An important part of the populist ethos was the idea of the new beginning that the movement would bring, whether this concerned the collective and mass refusal of the existing order at demonstrations (Demonstrace Holešovská výzva, 2012), or rhetoric regarding a "new constitution".

The opponents' view: legitimate, as long as they're powerless

The civic initiatives faced criticism above all from that part of the media which supported the neoliberal government and its reforms. The criticisms were a mixture, with some motifs familiar from opponents' previous discourses: the civic initiatives were perceived as the voice of those who had lost the elections and had no mandate from voters, and thus no legitimacy in their attempt to prevent the government's steps. The protests against the reforms were perceived as irresponsible, and while they were carried out by smallish groups, they were seen above all as the expression of minority ideologists. When they started to be carried out by more popular actors (unions, populists) they were then again taken as further evidence that the people were not competent enough to understand complicated questions of public policy. However, criticisms of the movement appeared with much less intensity than in the previous cases: they did not aim at overall delegitimisation, and they recognised the opposition movement's right to their own existence (conditional on its practical inability to have a realistic influence on the government's steps).

2.d Anti-Roma sentiment

From approximately 2008 onwards, there were major mobilisations against Roma people in various towns with a strong socially-excluded population. Starting with the protests on the Janov estate, they mostly followed real, or occasionally fabricated incidents of violent crime. Initially a key role in these was played by the extra-parliamentary and politically-marginal neo-Nazi Workers' Party (which, after a legal ban, was renewed as the Workers' Party for Social Justice). During the greatest escalation, in autumn 2011, a role was played by local politicians in established political parties, and above all by the self-organisation of local people. The atmosphere created by the media coverage of the riots in London also played a part. The demonstrations in some towns lasted for several months, and in some places it was only the presence of the police that stopped the events taking on the character of retaliations or pogroms.

Taxes and rules: We are the nation (too)

The evocation of the nation in the anti-Roma meetings had a strong protest character. It was constructed largely on the basis of two elements: taxes and rules. On the basis of references to taxes and rules, “inadaptable” Roma were construed as those who did not belong to the nation, without it even being necessary to talk about race. The references to rules and to the payment of taxes also allowed this mobilisation to formulate its own legitimacy with regard to the state and its elites: the slogan *“you live off our taxes, and on top of that you beat us,”* which the demonstrators often shouted and had printed on T-shirts, could refer either to the “unadaptable” Roma or to the police and, by extension, to the elites (Kolektivně proti kapitálu 2012, Slačálek 2014).

Regional truth: Experience speaks

As well as rules, a key source of legitimacy became the fact of belonging to a region. Political elites and the media, as well as anti-racists (the theme of non-government organisations was present, but had not yet become markedly accentuated) were delegitimised partly because of not being able to get out of their duties, and above all because they did not live in the place in question and had no relevant experience. The label “Prague” or “Brussels” also became a way of denoting the establishment, implying incompetence and an inability to understand the given situation.

Mass participation brings self-confidence and a feeling of joy, as even an anti-racist journalist noticed. *“Two expressions alternated on their faces for periods of several moments: terrible hatred and inexpressible happiness. I have never seen so many smiling and happy faces. People shouting ‘Gypsies to the gas chambers!’ with beatific smiles and eyes full of relief.”* (Brož 2011).

The opponents’ view: Racists or “ordinary people abused by demagogues”

The direct opponents of the protests, who in some cases confronted the demonstrations with counter-demonstrations, were liberals, defenders of human rights and the new left. They often travelled to the places in question from larger towns, above all from Prague, which understandably made them less convincing. Further, some of the larger media and some politicians were also significant critics of the demonstrations.

Racism was declared to be an evil whose unacceptability was shown by the past. As an explanation for racist attitudes, stupidity was accepted, along with a lack of education and poverty. Poverty, in some cases, was seen as the logical result of stupidity, a lack of education and racism, and created a picture of overall inferiority. A frequent reaction on the part of the anti-racists was either condemnatory and confrontational rhetoric, or ridicule, which was meant to underline the intellectual and overall inferiority of the racists.

In general, the basic image of the demonstrations shared by the mainstream media, politicians and many opponents of racism, was an attempt to differentiate the real social problems of local people, for whom understanding was expressed (mostly in a paternalistic way), and racism, which was unacceptable. On one hand, understanding was expressed for the protestors (sometimes even on the part of their opponents, who tried to “redirect the anger” of the protestors away from Roma towards the government and speculators); while on the other hand, fears were expressed that they were being abused by right-wing extremists and

demagogues. An emblematic figure in this latter depiction of the protests was one of their leaders, Lukáš Kohout, who in the past had committed a number of frauds (sve, 2011). However, the fact that opponents of Roma allowed themselves to be led by such a leader was also the source of further ridicule.

2.e Islamophobia

Czech public opinion provided Islamophobic attitudes with fairly fertile ground upon which to grow, above all as a result of the way in which a large section of the media, including the liberal and mainstream media, covered the subject of Islam and above all the cohabitation of Muslim and majority populations in Western Europe. This one-dimensional, stereotyping and securitising view was shared by large sections of the elites and the public. Even before he was elected, Miloš Zeman became famous for remarks of this type: *“There is no such thing as a moderate Muslim, just as there is no such thing as a moderate Nazi.”* (Buchert 2011).

From the 1990s onwards, Czech Islamophobia displayed itself in local protests against the construction of mosques on Czech territory (Vojtíšek 2006), with the first single-issue campaigns starting to appear after 2001. The grouping that met with the greatest reception was a Facebook page entitled *Islám v České republice nechceme* (We Don’t Want Islam in the Czech Republic) or IVČRN. Around this, a group formed that, after the massacre in the Parisian offices of *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015, initiated a demonstration calling for Islam to be banned by law as a totalitarian ideology. As a result of the refugee crisis and the discussion of quotas for refugees, the demonstration led to an extensive mobilisation, as well as to differentiation in the movement.

The main current in the movement, led by the entomologist Martin Konvička and the sociologist Petr Hampl, called on the rhetorical level for the protection of liberal freedoms and human rights from an Islamic invasion. At the same time, it contained heavy self-criticism of the liberal society as too soft and incapable of defending itself in the face of danger, alienated from its roots, both economic (the market, the “assembly line” economy tied directly to production) and biological (the “natural” gender order tied to tradition, and even more to sociobiology). This part of the movement created the Blok proti islámu, later the Blok proti islamizaci (Bloc Against Islamisation) and organised a number of demonstrations, one even being supported by Miloš Zeman, who attended and made a speech. The largest of these events in February had around 5,000 participants. This part of the movement eventually broke up into a number of factions trying to establish a Czech version of the Alternative for Germany party.

The more radical faction of the movement was connected with the extreme right, above all with Národní demokracie (National Democracy) and its leader Adam B. Bartoš, who conflated Islamophobia and open racism, anti-semitism and threats of violence (at one demonstration, he threatened the government with a noose). The Islamophobic mobilisation also provoked the establishment of a number of local “home guard” groups, which declared their willingness to defend Czech territory with weapons, and to actively prepare for such defence.

Defence of the Czech nation (and of Europe too…?)

The movement presented itself as the protector of the Czech nation. At demonstrations, as well as placards with crossed-out mosques, participants held Czech flags. The movement was the first nationwide

mobilisation since 1989 (with the exception of the marginal nationalists and communists) to emphasise the positive significance of the state borders, and to call for their thorough protection. In a certain sense, it was an antithesis to "open borders" as one of the emphasised gains of the Velvet Revolution of 1989.

The defence of "our values" became the main part of the programme of the whole movement. When asked what the national values were that they wanted to defend, respondents' answers tended towards very vague descriptions of school history, significant historical figures or a description of the necessity of protecting national property (or its return to national ownership). Respondents did not, by and large, respond with a positive definition of national values. What was far more fundamental was their self-perception in terms of the way they perceive the rest of Europe. This is perceived as a zone of almost failed states that have been incapable of standing up to "Islamisation". Such a perception is in direct contrast to the way in which the West (and specifically Western Europe) has been perceived in the quarter-century since the fall of communism. For the first time, there is a mass perception of Western Europe not as a model, but as a warning example. The Czech Republic, with an Islamophobic movement at its head, was to become a messianic defender not only of national values, but European, indeed liberal ones.

In the concept of the movement, however, universal liberal values, valid anywhere in the world, often become more of a distinctive characteristic of the West. In this dichotomy, Islam then stands by its very definition against such values. Liberal Europe clashes with totalitarian Islam, understood as a totalitarian ideology following the model of Nazism. Europe's overly-liberal nature, meanwhile, paralyses it and makes it soft and effeminate, incapable of defending itself against a foreign invasion. It thus needs the corrective that the Islamophobic movement offers: not only hardness towards Muslims, but also a return to "natural" market values and the gender order. If we want to keep Europe free for the next generation, we have to step down for a moment from our liberal limits and, using a certain allegory of a state of emergency, agree to the overall reconstruction of society and above all the protection of our borders. These borders, meanwhile, are both geographic and cultural. An accent on them can be seen in the most visible Muslim attributes which, in the case of women is a veil covering the hair. This has been described using emotions of fear, signalling an alleged invasion of Europe by Islam: *"Let Muslim women wear veils, in their own countries, but it doesn't belong here,"* one of the respondents said.

The demonstrators today have a feeling of superiority towards Western Europe, since they believe they know the answers to the problems it is suffering. This is a situation in which they can let Western Europe have back the feeling of humiliation that they felt in the years of post-communist integration. Thus, one of the speakers at the demonstration of 2 June 2016 spoke of the humiliation of a migrant worker from a Central European country, who has had to put up with limitations and long waits, and who now sees the EU opening its arms to immigrants from the third world, who he believes are coming in with no limitations or regulation. The younger brother, previously underestimated and continually lectured to, now finds himself in the role of someone who has grasped the depth of the problem. He may be able to save Western Europe from itself. Or, at any rate, he has a chance to protect himself from the fate into which the Western part of the EU has fallen through its own mistakes, and into which it now wants to drag the Czech Republic through forcing refugee

quotas on it. In this discourse, Czechs appear either as messiahs, offering a lifeline to Europe, or at least in the role of clever little people who have realised something that the large European nations were unable to grasp.

Instead of Western Europe, other models were needed. The US, with President Barack "Hussein" Obama and its interracial tensions, was also unable to fulfil this role (the situation later changed with the coming of Trump, of whom the Islamophobes were explicit fans). Instead, the main models were states that combined well-guarded sovereignty, the presence of authority in the public sphere, a culture of economic performance and, ideally, also direct democracy: Japan and above all Switzerland (Petr Hampl once described it as his goal to "Switzerlandise" the Czech Republic) (Hampl w.d.).

Unnatural elites

The self-concept of the movement in relation to politicians falls into the dichotomy of the people versus the elite. The goal of the movement is then to return power into the hands of ordinary people. This power has, however, been taken from them not only by the political elite, but also by the media (through its limitations on freedom of speech by means of political correctness), the university elites from the humanities fields, and non-government organisations (criticised for their allegedly parasitical behaviour and their indirect, non-political exercise of political influence). The political elite is not described as a clientelist network, but as a hazily-defined group of people, or a minority who are unjustly occupying positions of power. The movement thus becomes a dissident one, defending a truth that everyone is allegedly scared to express. Its rise is a new beginning, the promise of a revolution that will come soon, and which already justifies the movement's spokesman in warning students not to sign up for humanities subjects and not to think about working for a non-government organisation. To start studying the non-profit sector at university in 2015, he says, would be as unwise as joining the Communist Party in the summer of 1989 (Eurozprávy.cz, 2015).

Mandate of the people vs. parasitic NGOs

During the interviews, it became clear that for most participants, it was their first time at a demonstration. Hitherto, they had not taken much interest in politics, had not signed petitions, had voted only sporadically, and had never been to a local council meeting. The emotions that ran through all the interviews related to the urgent feeling that there was a need to "do something" and a feeling of disappointment in politicians who "don't do anything".

Now the demonstrators are in the public arena, they are participating and they also find themselves at the centre of attention. They fill squares and the pages of newspapers. The sin that connects politicians with the other enemies of the movement is that they are acting against the will of the people. Journalists are attacked for not writing the truth, because they are tied by the language of political correctness or dictats from above. The discourse of one member of the movement, who asked at a lecture on Islam why journalists did not write what 99% of people thought, indicates that not even journalists are spared the logic of representing the nation. NGOs are becoming one of the greatest enemies. Initiated by the state or Brussels, and paid for from "our taxes", NGOs are becoming the opposite pole of the real civil society that can be seen on the squares.

The moderately privileged (NGOs and the students and teachers of humanities subjects) are thus becoming the target instead of the highest placed (the oligarchs). Their modus operandi is placed under a microscope, and at the same time becomes the object of stereotypical scandalisation: non-government organisations are accused of leading a parasitical mode of existence (the fact that they live off redistribution leads them to be compared by Petr Hampl, the movement’s ideologue, to Roma living off benefits). They are also accused of becoming the tools of foreign interests as a result of their foreign financing. What the concept of transactional activism has tried to describe in neutral terms using the language of social science (or in Císař’s case even to defend, using the language of liberal political theory) becomes the subject of political accusation. Participation and anti-elite efforts are placed in antithesis to the “false imitation of the people” – so-called civil society, which according to Hampl is “created by the ruling party” (Hampl 2015) – or according to further rhetoric in the movement, is becoming a “new bourgeoisie” (Nová buržoazie, 2016).

The opponents’ view: Racists with no real experience, victims of demagogy, little Czechs without a broader outlook

The opponents of the Islamophobes were once again pro-EU oriented liberals, anti-racists and the new left. In this case, too, there was both mobilisation against racism conceived of as an absolute evil and a display of unacceptable political extremism, and an understanding of the “real fears” (an often shared fear of similarly-essentialised “Islam”) abused by “populists”. Here, too, a key image was the figures of the leaders (above all the Islamophobe leader Martin Konvička) and their lack of credibility. A key difference, however, was the relationship to experience. Participants in anti-Roma demonstrations could invoke their experience of Roma, which the opponents of racism had either to accept or to doubt. However, in the case of fear of Islam, the opponents of the Islamophobes stressed the absence of experience, the lack of Islam in the Czech Republic and the lack of knowledge of the European and world situation (Ostřanský, 2014). Given that the dispute not only concerned the relationship to Islam, but also the European Union, the Islamophobes were often depicted as limited and ignorant, believing unreliable information from the Internet, or conspiracy theories. Once again, the motif of the stupidity and inferiority of racism appears, connected with the stupidity of an inward-looking Czechness, and these characteristics are ascribed in some cases to the lower social strata and older people (see the hip-hop song, PSH – Fuck Off, 2016).

Mobilisation/ issue	**Thank You, Now Go! and other mobilisations against the opposition agreement**	**No to the Bases**	**Anti-austerity: ProAlt/Grassroot Alternative/populists**	**Anti-Roma sentiment**	**Islamophobia**
Period	1999–2001, with later link-ups	2006–2009	2010–2013	mainly 2008, 2011	2015–2016
Nation (main images evoked in connection with it)	Memories of the 1989 revolution, middle classes, possibility of return to the West	Small nation against great power politics, sovereignty, historical traumas	Society, solidarity (with no national specification)/colony/ the enslaved nation against the elites	Race, taxes, rules	End of catching up with the West, long-term frustration at being disparaged
Self-concept	Representatives of the "proper" people (shown by continuity with the 1989 revolution, mass support and participation of "personalities")	Representatives of the people (shown by agreement with the majority position)	Opponents of neoliberalism, representatives of social solidarity, later representatives of critical section of the people (shown by alliance with unions)/ representatives of the people (shown by opposition to the elite)	Representatives of the people (shown by race/ethnicity, observing rules, paying taxes)	Representatives of the nation, feeling of a new historic role in the defence of the Czech Republic and possibly all of Europe
Civil society	Partly self-concept, partly sees civil society as undeveloped – its development is a hope for the future	Partly self-concept, partly distance	Partly self-concept, partly alienation	Alienation, enmity	Synonym for NGOs and other privileged groups, negative connotations
Images of enemies	Politicians who stole the revolution, communists	US elite, George W. Bush, arms companies, Czech Atlanticists	Government, pension funds, tax havens, high finance, defenders of neoliberalism	Roma (or "unadaptable" Roma), the elites who protect them	Islam, EU, NGOs, political elite, "refugee welcomers"
Enemies	Representatives of opposition agreement	Pro-American politicians and journalists, the anti-communist right	Neoliberal politicians and journalists	Liberal journalists, anti-racism activists	Liberal journalists, anti-racists
Most distinctive discourse of opponents	Absence of democratic legitimacy arising from electoral competition, elitism, artists who do not work	The mistaken or demonic people; left-wing extremists, Russian agents	The voice of those who lost the elections, the irresponsible and incompetent people, or social groups; activities that are legitimate, if they are powerless	Racists, stupid, uneducated and poor people; the victims of poverty demagogy and sometimes of extremism; sometimes the bearers of real experience	Racists and sometimes extremists; sometimes the bearers of real fears; absence of real experience; parochial narrow-mindedness, victims of demagogy

Conclusions

If we wish to build on Holý’s reconstruction of the Czech autostereotype, we should recapitulate that the “Little Czech” has behind him over the past two decades a remarkable history of public mobilisations. He has been all sorts of things. Our overview has clearly shown that his participation in public life has not been exhausted by the “transactional activism” of non-government organisations (cf. Saxonberg–Jacobsson 2013). As we have seen, he has had the opportunity to take part in activities that fall under the heading both of “civil” and “uncivil” society, and above all we have seen that the disputes over the classification of these movements (although they are mostly played out using other concepts) are a key part of their struggles for legitimacy.

The mobilisations in question are difficult to compare. Some conclusions are that the comparison offers are foreseeable and banal (it is clear that mobilisations of this type will lay claim to representing “the people”, that they will try to define themselves in opposition to variously-defined elites, that they will have in them an element that is spellbound by its own participation, etc.). Some differences are a fairly logical result of the different political backgrounds and scope of the mobilisations.

However, we believe there is a certain interest when we compare some conclusions concerning the nation and civil society.

As far as the nation is concerned, it seems that Czech national identity may be, if not quite anything it wants to be, certainly very many things. The nation often means a memory of the Velvet Revolution of 1989. It may also mean a collection of roles, the observance of which (together with the “correct” skin colour) gives inhabitants of the periphery the feeling that they are justified in belonging to the same whole as the inhabitants of the centre. The nation may be a subject that is threatened by a “Muslim invasion”, which has to be prevented by thorough defence of the state borders, and a subject (or maybe rather an object) of international economic relations that have made it into a colony, just as it may also be exposed to threats emanating from the geopolitical games of the great powers. Some elements have been more marked than others (such as the “smallness” emphasised by Holý).[12] However, these characteristics, too, have no fixed meaning, and may be used in highly different ways to argue various positions. It seems that the Czech national identity has no clear content, but may be filled with differing meanings, and that for this very reason it is relatively difficult to build a concrete and positive national project around it. With this, we definitely do not mean to say that Czech society

12 Of the 28 countries of the EU, the Czech Republic is eleventh in terms of the number of inhabitants. In the Czech context, however, it is not usual to perceive countries of a comparable size (Belgium, Sweden) or even considerably smaller (Austria, Finland, Ireland) as “small”. The label “small nation”, as well as all the moral mythology that goes with it (the smaller and weaker as the bearers of moral superiority) may be understood above all as the result of the traditional definition of the Czech identity vis-a-vis the German, and also as the result of the concept, discussed above, of the Czech Republic as a land of “little people”, the absence of aristocratic elites. An interesting interpretation of the concept of “small nation” can be found in Milan Kundera’s famous essay on central Europe. According to Kundera, “small nation” is a metaphor for “non-self-evident nation” – a small nation may perish at any time, and it knows it. From this point of view, the “small nation” is the paradigmatic state of Central Europe (Kundera illustrates its definition using the words of the Polish hymn “Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła”/“Poland Is Not Yet Lost”), and according to Kundera, with the gradual triumph of the anonymous technological civilisation over concrete culture, the “small nation” will become a paradigm for the existence of any European nation. Without wishing to take issue with the preciseness of these essayist diagnoses, we have to say that in the Czech context, the term “small nation” has a much wider semantic scope. This scope differs considerably in a number of elements from the Polish national identity, which may certainly see its nation as“non-self-evident”, but definitely not as “small” (cf. Tesař 1984a, cf. Kundera 1984, cf. Slačálek 2009, 2010, 2016).

is immune to xenophobia, nationalist isolationism and brutalisation, or that the cleavage between conservative and liberal values is not now being pushed as being of key importance here. We are merely stating that it is an important part of the explanation of the cultural and political *forms* in which the assertion of these phenomena takes place, an important part of the explanation as to why they differ, and probably will continue to differ, from developments in Poland and Hungary.

What does, however, connect all the mobilisations is that a key part of the way in which the nation is seen concerns its *relationship to the West*, although this takes very different forms with the various mobilisations. With the mobilisations of the late 1990s we still see integration into Western structures as the source of the chief hope for society. However, further mobilisations already reflect the consequences of this integration as a fact. In the case of the protests against the radar system, the movement balked at the efforts of its opponents to frame the debate on the US military as a further debate on whether we "belong to the West", and alongside sovereignty arguments, it also developed arguments relating to the European Union and American opponents of such systems. The protests against neoliberal reforms did not play the national card, at least to start with. They perceived the local application of austerity policies as the local version of neoliberalism. It was only later that the relationship with the West became an important part of the argumentation of some members of the anti-austerity movement, when they began to address the subject of capital outflow and foreign ownership, and some of them started to see the Czech Republic as a colony. For the anti-Roma, protests the West was more of an enemy entity, with "Brussels" becoming in their imagination a place of even greater alienation and of standing up for Roma than "Prague".

Nevertheless, a total inversion of the relationship with the West comes only with the Islamophobic movement, in which Western Europe is a source of fear and at the same time its elites are one of the main political enemies (if not the main political enemy, since Islam is described more as a depoliticised and dehumanised natural catastrophe than political enemy). This relationship to the West, and the shared stimuli concerning the migration crisis, may be something that brings developments in the individual countries of the V4 closer together.

The memory of the revolution of 1989 is a very important one in the mobilisations, with many of them trying to mimic it in various aspects. The memory of the Velvet Revolution is important for two reasons. Firstly, it is a source of legitimacy and the beginning of the current regime (from which comes both the significance of the memory of the Velvet Revolution, and the variety in the way it is assessed by individual actors). It is also a reminder that fundamental social change came in the past from squares full of people and extensive social mobilisation. Both these factors allow specific games to develop around the memory of the Velvet Revolution, games concerning both the legitimacy of the regime and of the movements that challenge it.

In most of these mobilisations, *class* is not a theme. The exception is the reference to the interest of the "entrpreneurial middle class" in the Thank You, Now Go! declaration. Even the employee representatives in the unions prefer to appear in a coalition, and stress the interest of the whole of society – or the nation. This corresponds to the findings of Kolářová and Vojtíšková (2008) that for most of the post-communist period, the concept of class has been a displaced word, and Drahokoupil's statement (2015: 577) that *"the only class that*

has consolidated after the end of state socialism was the 'middle class'."

If class is a theme, then it is above all one in hostile discourse: for the opponents of the movement against the opposition agreement, it is important to declare that the movement's representatives are elite artists with no real relationship to work (which to a certain extent is only a hostile inversion of their own self-perception as "elites" and "personalities"). The same is true of the ideologues of the Islamophobic movement, when they describe teachers and students of humanities and social sciences, and NGOs. Anti-racists, on the other hand, sometimes give their criticism of racism undertones of a class-shaped view. The bearers of racism are seen as uneducated, poor and unsuccessful. This hostile ascribing of class characteristics has the significance of disqualification, and to a certain extent, functionally corresponds to the declaration that the opponents are "foreign agents" (although there is a different relationship here to their deliberateness and "evil intentions". Class, here, is above all, other people.

Further significant conclusions concern the concept of civil society and its substitution by NGOs. In the mobilisation against the opposition agreement, "civil society" is used not only as self-identification, but as a source of hope. Many public intellectuals connected with the mobilisation claimed that the country lacked a robust "third sector", a civil society standing outside the state and the market. Once it had one, they claimed, Czech society would be much better off. The next two mobilisations come from a different political camp than most of the liberal-right opponents of the opposition agreement, and it is likely that they were considered by many of the latter to be illegitimate: part of "uncivil society". They themselves tended to make only sparing use of the rhetoric of "civil society" (partly because in the Czech public discourse, it was connected with the legacy of the political camp around Václav Havel), but at the same time a reference to this "civil society" formed part of their legitimacy. In the case of the next two mobilisations, we see a shift: "civil society", embodied by anti-racism activists and non-government organisations, is perceived as the enemy. Indeed, in the case of the Islamophobes it is perceived as a key enemy. This is not merely an evaluation, but also a description: something that for liberal optimists at the end of the 1990s was a counterpart to power, and for the Islamophobe ideologists, a paid tool of the "governing class".

NGOs are in this view rejected because in the context of the decline of civilisation and its struggle for survival, the principles that they assert, and the money spent on their existence, is a luxury that society cannot afford. Their mode of existence, living off redistribution, is described as something that runs counter to the natural (market) order of the world. Naturalness, according to Islamophobic criticism, also runs counter to their concept of anti-racism and the allegedly excessive degree of solidarity that they promote, something that according to the Islamophobes must, in the face of a crisis, be rejected as soft. This type of criticism of NGOs may be understood as a symptom and display of the way in which the attitudes of the Islamophobic movement essentially correspond to Adorno's description of the authoritarian personality (Adorno et al, 1950), if, unlike the original authors, we take it more as a cultural and political rather than a psychological type.

This description of the criticism of NGOs is correct, but we believe that it is insufficient. It is not enough to classify criticism of NGOs as an expression of political demagogy, although it undoubtedly is. It should also be seen that NGOs and civil society as a whole have indeed failed to fulfil, in great part, the expectations and

hopes that had been placed in them. Klaus and Zeman, in stating that civil organisations should create their own political party and try to succeed in elections with it, captured in an aggressively polemical way the fact that displays of civic self-organisation have a problem in demonstrating their own legitimacy. In the case of those that have changed into competitive grant-funded firms, and yet as part of their "aura" have retained an atmosphere of general good, this problem with demonstrating legitimacy becomes even stronger, and for a political demagogue, this tension around legitimacy may become an easy subject of rhetorical attack. This may make use of an interesting paradox (Mudde, 2003 and above): that while "uncivil society" movements frequently function in a way that is internally non-hierarchical, in practice they perform civil equality (corrected by charismatic leadership). The "civil sector", meanwhile, which was meant to be an alternative to the state and the market, takes on a culture and hierarchical structures from the world of business. Among employers and managers, even in a NGO, there is not much space for civil equality.

On the basis of our research, we find ourselves able to agree with the statement by Fagan and others that the NGO-isation of civil society causes alienation (see below). At the same time, however, we have seen that participatory activism on the level of the large social movements is a source of *hostile and exclusionary rhetoric*, as a rule on both sides – both that of the participatory activists and their critics. If we were to be tempted to ascribe this exclusionary rhetoric to the "immaturity" of post-communist political culture, we could find a number of similar examples from "developed Western democracies": and we do not even have to recall De Gaulle's claim that the "German Jew" wished to influence developments in France in 1968. The alternative explanation that offers itself is that the aggressive, hostile and exclusionary rhetoric is in play here as a result of a situation when a participatory movement has the power to influence something (or, as in the case of racism, to cause moral scandal) or at least, the participating actors think so. Where we have identified a fall in the intensity of exclusionary rhetoric and the acceptance of the legitimacy of the experience of protest movements (in the case of the anti-austerity movements), this recognition was connected at the same time to an awareness that these movements were practically unable to influence anything. Once again, this is not a post-communist aberration, but more part of a worldwide trend (cf. Krastev 2014).

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